DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 296 957 SP 030 264

AUTHOR Womack, Karen King
TITLE Renewal And Restructuring.
PUB DATE [88]
NOTE 6p.; Document may not reproduce well due to small type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College School Cooperation; *Collegiality; *Educational Change; Educational Legislation; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Improvement Programs; *Institutional Cooperation; *Mentors; Participative Decision Making
IDENTIFIERS Arkansas; *Educational Renewal Consortium

ABSTRACT

A discussion is presented of the work of the Educational Renewal Consortium, a national network for renewal in higher education and the public schools. The foremost characteristic of renewing institutions is recognizing the intractibility of some school problems and working collaboratively with other institutions to find solutions. Teachers in these institutions are involved in all goal setting for schools, programs, staffing, hiring of teachers and administrators and all other pertinent aspects of school management. A description is given of a joint project sponsored by the consortium involving the University of Central Arkansas and the Dardanelle School District. The project has three main parts: an administrative internship program, a sophomore field experience with "at-risk" students, and a mentor teacher project. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED296957

RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

by

Karen King Womack

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K.K. Womack

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP030264

RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

by

Karen King Womack

Incentives for change in teaching are within teachers. With the need for creativity in teaching also comes creativity in renewal and restructuring. Professional renewal is much needed for the mental and physical health for teachers. These needs are difficult to accommodate in an atmosphere of legislated learning (Phi Delta Kappan. January 1988) which limits the amount of control teachers and administrators have over the processes of student learning and those who promote those processes. Professional renewal is a means by which teachers can become aware of and obtain supervised practice varying approaches to teaching and classroom management.

Renewal is closely aligned with restructuring. The purpose of renewal is "to build the will and capacity of people at the local level to make the changes needed for lasting school improvement." In this way schools maintain on-going restructuring based on the current research and what is working for each local district and local students. Professionalism is high as well as morale because the stakeholders make the decisions. Legislated learning is therefore not needed. Restructuring and renewal are ways that the profession can improve itself without relying on well-intended but sometimes contradictory or counterproductive legislation.

The Educational Renewal Consortium is a national network for renewal in higher education and public schools established by John Goodlad. It involves fourteen states, Arkansas being one. Within Arkansas, nine school districts and two universities are renewing institutions. They are University of Central Arkansas, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Stuttgart, Bald Knob, Dardanelle. Sheridan, Marianna, Fayetteville, Springdale, Cabot and Little Rock. The Arkansas Education Renewal Consortium is funded by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

Renewing institutions share certain common characteristics. According to the Consortium newsletter, the foremost characteristic is "recognizing how intractible some of the real problems are and being willing to listen to and work with other institutions in finding solutions." In addition, the consortium has identified these characteristics as important to renewal inside the institution:

1. Processes in place which support
   * Clear and open channels of upward as well as downward communication.
   * Involvement of people at all levels in making decisions about the work for which they will be held accountable.
   * Involvement of community and other stakeholders in planning.
   * The development of institutional vision which is shared at all levels and which is translated into practical and appropriate action.
   * Leadership which is focused on the empowerment of others inside the institution.
   * Periodic evaluation which is used to improve institutional performance.

2. Formalized structures which provide time for and set a high priority on better planning, communication and staff growth experiences.

3. A change agenda which deals with the improvement of the quality of instruction. the curriculum, and the way in which all students are educated.

Renewal and Restructuring
by Karen Womack

All members inside the institution must be devoted to renewal for it to work. It must be a collaborative effort on the part of all concerned. The outcome will be people trusting and valuing each other's ideas. The response to student needs will be awareness and concern.

Teachers are capable of restructuring schools so that most students are able to learn under optimum conditions. Teachers and students are the stakeholders in this process. Therefore, teachers should have a major say in shaping the program they believe will be best suited to the needs of their students. Teachers in restructuring schools are involved in the goal setting for schools, programs, staffing, hiring of teachers and administrators and all other pertinent aspects of school management. Restructuring takes a commitment to betterment of schools at all levels - from the superintendent and board downward.

Part of what is being discovered in the renewal and restructuring process is that not all of the innovations and inventions of the 1960s and 1970s were bad. A surfacing concern, for instance, is the hurried ignoring of individual differences while on the way to legislatively-mandated "homogeneity." Students in classrooms still are not homogeneous in relation to important instruction-related variables. Classrooms are not homogeneous, nor have they been, nor are they likely to be. A considerable body of research has shown us that the expository whole-group method of teaching is not right for all students all of the time. Yet the legislated learning approach has resulted in mandates in several states that (1) teachers will be evaluated by use of an instrument that leans heavily in the direction of large-group expository teaching, or that (2) teacher training institutions must adopt one model of teaching and prepare its undergraduates in that [one] way, or (3) in order to obtain merit pay, teachers must show excellence in utilizing expository methods to the exclusion of all others. This is in effect a mandate that all students must learn in the same way and at the same rates. There is gradually surfacing a renewed interest in self-paced, independent, and individualized methods to accommodate those student characteristics. These methods can be taught to teachers and then given opportunities to become part of teachers' repertoires through supervised practice through mentor teachers. This is but one illustration of what renewal and restructuring can do for a profession.

There are varying perceptions of the drop-out problem in Arkansas and in the various states (Hahn, 1987). There are a number of ways that a person who does not attend school can be reported, and some of these do not add to the "drop-out" category, although that is in fact what took place. Public fears of a rising drop-out rate and teacher perceptions of the drop-out rate make a fertile seedbed for professional renewal to enable professionals to make schools enjoyable, success-oriented places. Students and teachers alike complain of curricula that emphasize the basics, that make use of constant drill, that inform but do not inspire. The standards appear to be having this kind of effect. Drop-out statistics for Arkansas are not quoted here, but the Institute for Educational Leadership (1987) gives drop-out rates in Chicago at 50.7% and 40% to 60% in major cities such as Boston, Los Angeles, and Detroit. The reasons for dropping out of school are many and complex, but "canned," standardized, and uninspired teaching is not likely to help. Professional renewal and some degree of professional freedom to try what works would help some.

Since the legislated learning approach has served to stifle schools, support from the governor has been indispensible in the restructuring process. He has given 15 Arkansas schools permission to ignore the standards where needful as long as the end result is that students can pass the basic skills tests. One drawback is that this has been allowed in high schools only, with less freedom of choice given to elementary and middle/junior high schools who could benefit from the creative freedom allowed in this approach.

State-wide the consortium has many projects. In October Sylvia Rimm was a guest speaker. Her topic was "The Underachievement Syndrome." In January, Ann Lieberman spoke on renewal.

then several task forces met to continue the commitment to collaboration and communication. These task forces include teachers, principals, and administrators/site directors. A leadership workshop was held in January to teach teachers to think big and accept leadership roles. Philip Schelecty and John Goodlad are scheduled as upcoming speakers.

The consortium also sponsors a joint project between UCA and Dardanelle. This project has three main parts. One is the administrative internship program whereby two graduate assistantships are based in Dardanelle. As it has worked out, one of these positions has been assistant principal at the middle school. This intern has gleaned real hands on experience in school administration. The other position has been based in the superintendent's office, and he has gotten an overview of the workings of the entire district.

At the end of the first year, these have been identified as strengths of the administrative internship program by people involved in the programs· Interns can learn realistic dimensions of the job, time allocation, duties, functions, and responsibilities of administrators. The administrative internship provided "real" experiences for interns by creating opportunities for them to assume specific, real administrative assignments. The administrative was evaluated as "an excellent program for the preparation of Dardanelle faculty members who wish to become administrators." The administrative internship program provides the opportunity for UCA faculty and graduate students to conduct on-site research beneficial to schools and to the program.

A second part of the Dardanelle project deals with a sophomore field experience. This is designed to be different than most other schools in that it takes "at risk" students and exposes them to a total school experience. These students are placed with a "base" teacher but actually visit many classrooms, interview administrators, attend school board meetings and other after-hours "duty" assignments that teachers incur.

The third part of the Dardanelle project is a mentor teacher project. In the summer of 1987 twenty-four teachers began training to be mentors. The mentor concept is a non-threatening helper/friend to aid the new teacher on a voluntary basis so they can experience a successful first year. It is hoped that this will help more teachers to stay in teaching and lower the high dropout rate. The training for the mentor pool has gone on all year. The group has been given information pertinent to the local district about such things as resources, policies, requirements and procedures. In addition, the pool has been trained in methods of data collection and conferencing, school law and special education. Again, the group decided in a collaborative effort with the University of Central Arkansas which things were vital to the program. The group will receive three hours graduate credit from UCA for the workshop. In addition, the group will be used to help train other mentors in the state. The course will be offered from UCA. Next year's mentor teachers in Dardanelle will be chosen by peers from the mentor pool.

Three mentors were needed for the 1987-88 school year because of the large number of new teachers joining the Dardanelle system. These clinical interns consisted of brand-new teachers as well as experienced teachers new to the district. These clinical interns were offered three hours of graduate credit for participating in the program. They attended a pre-school inservice to acquaint them with things pertinent to the district. Mentor teachers held weekly seminars to communicate information to each group. This information included lesson planning, how to implement the reading program, recognition of gifted/special students, and how to use positive reinforcement, to name a few topics. Seminars have been held both after school and during release time provided by a special grant. Individual observation and conferencing have been an ongoing part of this program. Some topics addressed have been in the areas of questioning skills, behavior modification, classroom management, and parent relations. To fulfill UCA requirements, the clinical interns have been trained in several

models of teaching. They are doing microteaching episodes in each model area which the mentors are supervising. Mentors have also gotten needed supplies to these teachers such as overhead projectors, file cabinets and instructional materials. In the spirit of renewal and restructuring the grant will be revised and improved for next year as we have learned things to help smooth the flow for each part of the program.

In the restructuring vein, all campuses voted to participate in the restructuring program. A brainstorming session was held to begin the reach for ideas at the elementary campus. Several of the possibilities which came up were a non-graded elementary strand for kindergarten through second or third grade, to departmentalize fifth grade, to semi-departmentalize fourth grade, and to go to a four-day week for students having the fifth day for planning, tutoring, research and meetings. Also postulated was a rotating system whereby teachers teach for 5-7 days and then have a day for planning and writing. On one of the days taught the students would be absorbed into one class so that on that day that class size might be as large as double. It would be worth it, though, when that class's teacher had a day for planning. Other ideas included non-graded reading program, instigating a whole language approach or metra type system for first grade reading, and all day kindergarten for at least two days per week.

Restructuring and renewal can fit nicely together. In Dardanelle we are committed to both. We must remember, however that "the primary vehicle for renewal in any institution is the individual." If individuals are not committed, there is little with which to work.

REFERENCES

Arkansas Renewal Consortium Update. October 1987, (3).

Gunter, M. (January 27, 1988). Leadership Workshop. Education Renewal Consortium.

Hahn, A. (1987). Reaching out to america's dropouts; what to do? Phi Delta Kappan, 69, (4), 256-263.

Institute for Educational Leadership. (1987). Dropouts in America: Enough Is Known.

Wise, A. E. (1988). The two conflicting trends in school reform: legislated learning revisited. Phi Delta Kappan, 69 (5), 328-333.